

Coins

1977 silver flukes add up to rarities for lucky fans

By Roger Boye

A FEW LUCKY collectors have found in circulation 1977-dated coins containing 40 per cent silver that apparently were made by mistake at the Denver Mint.

The silver quarters, half-dollars, and dollars are probably worth at least \$1,500 each, said error-coin expert Alan Herbert. He believes they were made on discarded planchets (blank slugs) that were created to produce coins for Bicentennial proof sets.

The "finds" are rare because no coin minted for circulation after 1964, except for half-dollars made from 1965 to 1970, is supposed to contain silver. Likewise, silver hasn't been used in United States proof coins since 1976.

Herbert said reports of the finds have led to a sharp increase in the number of silver-plated 1977 half-dollars being offered for sale. Hobbyists should not purchase a supposedly authentic 1977-D silver coin without first having it authenticated, warns the Numismatic News columnist.

ABRAHAM LINCOLN'S spot on the lowly cent apparently is assured for years to come because government executives believe a new design would prompt people to hoard the billions of cents now in circulation.

"If we ever had to replace the circulating pool of cents, it would overwhelm our capacity," said Dr. George E. Hunter, a mint administrator. "We're afraid to make any change in that denomination."

THE U.S. MINT won't release the names of 2.5 million coin collectors on its computerized mailing list, mint director Stella B. Hackel said, reaffirming government policy.

"I do not believe the federal government should be partly to exposing any person on its mailing list to even the remotest possibility of harm," she said in a letter to a commercial firm. Many collectors on the list own valuable rare coins.

Nevertheless, a legal counsel for the mint has admitted to Coin World that the names and addresses of several hundred thousand coin collectors were released earlier this decade by the General Services Administration (GSA), a government agency.

Many of the names on the GSA list—used to publicize the sale of Carson City silver dollars—came from the mint's mailing list.

THE ANNUAL coin auction of the Club of Illinois Numismatics will start at 8 p.m. Friday in the Homewood Village Hall at Chestnut and Martin streets. Approximately 75 lots will be on the block.